

# Chernenko New Soviet Leader

## Brezhnev Protege, 72, Will Succeed Andropov

From Times Wire Services

MOSCOW—Konstantin U. Chernenko, a Siberian peasant and a lifelong protege of President Leonid I. Brezhnev who patiently waited out the Andropov era, was chosen today as the new leader of the Soviet Union.

Chernenko, 72, was the oldest man ever elected to the powerful post of general secretary of the Communist Party. He replaced President Yuri V. Andropov, who died Thursday at the age of 69 after 15 months in office.

When Brezhnev died in November, 1982, it was widely believed that Chernenko was Andropov's rival for the party leadership. After Andropov won, it appeared that Chernenko's political future was in doubt, but he retained enough influence in the top party ranks to grasp the top party post.

In naming Chernenko, the ruling Politburo chose a member of the leadership's old guard rather than hand the reins of power to a member of the younger generation who could be expected to serve a decade or more.

Chernenko was chosen by his 11 fellow members of the ruling Politburo four days after Andropov's death. Unanimous approval by the Central Committee was announced at 2 p.m. (3 a.m. PST), as heads of state and government leaders from around the world gathered to attend Andropov's funeral Tuesday in Red Square.

**Call for 'Coexistence'**

In his acceptance speech, Chernenko immediately called for "peaceful coexistence" with the West, attributing the policy to Lenin rather than Nikita S. Khrushchev, the disgraced leader who made the term famous.

"Nowadays, in the age of nuclear weapons and super-accurate missiles, people need it as never before," Chernenko said in taking up the leadership of the 18-million-member party.

He said nobody should doubt the Soviet Union's desire to strengthen its capacity for defense "so that we may have the means to cool the hot heads of the military adventurists."

But he added: "The U.S.S.R. will cooperate fully with all states which are ready to help relieve international tensions with practical deeds, to create in the world an atmosphere of trust."

Vice President George Bush arrived in Moscow at the head of the U.S. delegation to Tuesday's state funeral for Andropov. About 100 other world leaders were expected to attend the ceremony in Red Square.

Bush went immediately from the airport in an eight-car motorcade to the House of Unions to pay his respects at Andropov's bier.

It was not immediately known whether Chernenko will speak privately with Bush and Senate Majority Leader Howard H. Baker Jr., who is accompanying Bush as President Reagan's representatives at the ceremonies.

Premier Nikolai A. Tikhonov, 78, the Politburo's oldest member, nominated Chernenko and described him as "a true associate of such Leninist-type leaders as Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev and Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov."

**'Talented Organizer'**

Tikhonov called Chernenko a "talented organizer of the masses, an ardent propagandist of Marxist-Leninist ideas, an unshakable fighter for putting into life the policy of our great party."

The new general secretary does not yet have the additional title of president, with which Andropov and Brezhnev consolidated their power. The presidency will probably remain vacant until the Supreme Soviet next meets, and elections for the new Parliament are scheduled for March 4.

Chernenko rose to power after spending 32 years as Brezhnev's closest aide and 15 months as runner-up to Andropov.

"We think he will not be a strong leader like Andropov and things will go back to the way they were under Brezhnev," one Soviet woman said in remarks typical of the average citizen's reaction. "We are expecting a big campaign of communist propaganda and ideology," the woman said. Chernenko was in charge of party ideology under Andropov.

The choice of Chernenko may have followed a tumultuous Politburo debate in which Andropov's reported heir apparent, Mikhail S. Gorbachev, 52, was considered by his colleagues too young to assume the leadership role likely to be available to him again in the future, foreign analysts said.

"He (Chernenko) can only be an interim leader and is likely to return the country to the immobility of the Brezhnev years rather than the vigor associated with Andropov," one Western diplomat said.

After Chernenko's selection was announced, he led several of his Politburo partners to the House of Unions. They formed a line at the foot of Andropov's wreath-bedecked bier and observed a moment of silence.

**Fatigued but Healthy**

Chernenko was flanked by Tikhonov on his left and Gorbachev on his right in a nationally televised show of unity.

The new party leader looked fatigued but generally healthy. He is a short, stocky man with high cheekbones and silver hair. Almost nothing is known about his personal life, even less than was known about Andropov's.

He is an ethnic Russian and his official biography says he was born to a peasant family in Siberia on Sept. 24, 1911, making him nearly eight months younger than President Reagan.

Chernenko's election to the party leadership came as foreign leaders from around the world were arriving for the funeral of Andropov, who is to be buried in the country's most exclusive cemetery.

The pine-shaded plot sits between the Lenin Mausoleum and the Kremlin wall on Red Square. Andropov will be the 11th person buried there. The most recent was Brezhnev in November, 1982.

The whole country will come to a standstill for the funeral. School sessions have been canceled for the day. All shops, factories farms and other enterprises will halt their activities for five minutes.

Trains and river and seagoing vessels will sound their whistles or horns for three minutes.

In an article written before Andropov's death and published in the Sunday Times of London, Chernenko said improving relations with the United States is "more important than ever before."

**'In Favor of Dialogue'**

Repeating the standard Kremlin line on U.S.-Soviet relations, he added, "We are in favor of an active and fruitful dialogue with nations living under a different social system to ours, the United States and Great Britain in particular."

But Chernenko stressed: "The Soviet Union has great military might. We are capable of meeting any challenge effectively. We hope, however, that nobody will be tempted to test the Soviet Union's strength again."

"We are not seeking military superiority, of course, but we will not concede to any nation gaining such superiority over us."